



News Release

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New Utah Department of Health Program Will Get Utahns Covered At Work

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Utahns who have been unable to afford their employer's health plan may now be able to get health coverage at work, thanks to an innovative program.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is pleased to announce that the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) has granted approval for the Primary Care Network (PCN) Covered At Work program. PCN Covered at Work, created and administered by the UDOH, will combine employer, employee, and state funds to help purchase private health insurance for up to 6,000 working Utahns.

Covered at Work is the newest addition to the Primary Care Network (PCN). PCN was made possible through a Federal Medicaid 1115 waiver approved in January of 2002 by Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson. Utah is the only state that has been given the authority by USDHHS to move forward on this type of health care benefit. Since PCN began accepting applications in July of 2002, about 15,500 people have enrolled.

Programs, like PCN Covered at Work, that improve access to preventive health care make economic sense. According to Governor Michael O. Leavitt, "The PCN Covered at Work program allows employers to provide a complete benefit package, which helps to reduce turnover and missed work days." Preventive care is less expensive and more effective than treatment and hospitalization, which may result when care is delayed due to cost. Access to health care results in improved health, which is associated with improved earnings and educational attainment.

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Page 2 of 2 – New UDOH Program Will Get Utahns Covered At Work

The PCN Covered at Work program is an insurance premium reimbursement program for adults who qualify. Adults who have access to health insurance at work, but the cost is greater than 5 percent of their income, may qualify. In addition, those who are ages 19-64, are U.S. citizens or legal residents, and meet income guidelines may qualify. For instance, a single person who earns \$1,123.00 per month or \$7.02 an hour would meet the income guidelines.

The new program will continue the work of PCN, to cover uninsured Utah adults, but with a twist. This program links those who have insurance available to them through their work to a way to pay for it. “This public/private partnership benefits employers and employees by making private insurance more accessible when it was previously out of reach,” says Rod Betit, Executive Director, UDOH. PCN Covered at Work reaches Utahns who have previously gone without health insurance, slipping through the cracks because they did not qualify for other programs. While PCN provides access to primary care benefits, PCN Covered at Work will provide a bridge to comprehensive private coverage.

Approximately 199,000 Utahns, or 8.7 percent of the population lack health insurance coverage, according to the 2001 Health Status Survey. About 145,000 of these individuals are adults. A goal of PCN, including Covered at Work, is to reduce the number of uninsured working adults ages 18-64 by about 25,000, or 16.5 percent.

The state and federal governments provide funding for PCN (including PCN Covered at Work). The total annual budget is \$16 million. The federal government contributes about 70 percent of the budget while 30 percent comes from the State General Fund.

The UDOH expects to begin accepting applications for PCN Covered at Work in August. For more information about PCN, visit the web site www.health.utah.gov/pcn or call the UDOH Health Resource Line 1-888-222-2542.

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